Ultimate Guide to the TOEFL® iBT (2026 Edition)

THE READING SYSTEM

ALL-NEW 2026 EXAM

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SYSTEM BOOKS

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THE TOEFL® READING REVOLUTION: WHY SKIMMING IS NO LONGER ENOUGH!

Mastering Suffixes, Spelling, and Speed for the Redesigned 2026 TOEFL® iBT

For decades, students prepared for TOEFL® Reading by learning how to skim long academic texts, match keywords, and guess vocabulary from context. **On January 21, 2026, those passive, shortcut-reliant strategies became obsolete.**

The new, adaptive TOEFL iBT Reading section demands active, high-precision language control. You are no longer just a passive reader; you are an active linguistic editor.

Consider the brand-new, highly challenging tasks you will face:

- **Complete the Words:** You are presented with a short paragraph where key words have missing letters. You must type in the correct endings, prefixes, or spelling patterns. A single slip—such as confusing *-tion* with *-sion*, or misapplying a silent letter—will instantly cost you points.
- **Read in Daily Life:** You must rapidly digest and answer highly detailed questions about campus notices, emails, schedules, and instructions where subtle nuances determine the correct answer.

If you struggle with English morphology (word families), grammatical categories (parts of speech), or spelling patterns, the new format will expose those weaknesses immediately.

Welcome to "The Reading System"

In this free preview, you will experience:

1. **The Anatomy of "Complete the Words" (Chapter 8):** Learn the exact grammatical and suffix-driven logic needed to predict and type missing letters with absolute confidence.
2. **Daily-Life Text Decoding (Chapter 19):** Discover how to parse fast-paced everyday campus texts without wasting precious exam time.

Stop guessing. Stop skimming. Learn to analyze the structural DNA of English.

Turn the page, take the challenge, and claim your target score.

Chapter 8: Introduction to “Complete the Words”

8.1 What Is the “Complete the Words” Task?

In the updated 2026 TOEFL iBT, the Reading section includes a new item type called “Complete the Words.” Many students have never seen this type of question before, so it can feel strange or scary at first. In this chapter, you will learn exactly what it looks like and how to do it step by step.

According to ETS, in this task you see:

- A short academic paragraph

– about 70–100 words, on a general academic topic (psychology, biology, history, education, etc.).

- The first sentence is complete – nothing is missing in that sentence.

- Starting from the second sentence, the second half of every second word is deleted.

- In total, 10 words in the paragraph are missing their second half.

- You must type the missing letters to complete each word.

You do not need to guess the whole word. Part of the word is already there; you only fill the missing letters at the end.

On the real test, it looks something like this (a very short sample just to show the idea):

Many animals use sound to communicate. This means they sen(1)_____ messag(2)_____ to oth(3)_____ animals usi(4)_____ nois(5)_____ or call(6)_____.

Here:

- “sen(1)_____” → send or sent? You use grammar and context to decide (send).

- “messag(2)_____” → messages (plural).

- “oth(3)_____” → other.

- “usi(4)_____” → using.

- “nois(5)_____” → noises.

- “call(6)_____” → calls.

On the TOEFL, the paragraphs are a little longer and the vocabulary is more academic, but the basic idea is the same.

8.2 What Skills Does This Task Test?

“Complete the Words” is not only about spelling. To do well, you must use several skills together:

1. Spelling patterns

2. Morphology (prefixes, suffixes, and word families)

3. Grammar and part of speech

4. Context and world knowledge

5. Collocations (common word combinations)

Let's look at each one briefly.

1. Spelling patterns

You need to recognize common English spelling endings, such as:

Ending	Examples
-tion	information, education, pollution
-ment	movement, development, government
-able / -ible	comfortable, possible, visible
-ous	dangerous, famous, various

If you see:

The govern(1)_____ decided to change the law.

You probably know the base word *govern* and the common noun *government*, so you can fill *ment*.

2. Morphology (prefixes, suffixes, word families)

Morphology is about how small parts (prefixes and suffixes) combine to make bigger words.

Examples:

- Prefixes: *un* (not), *re* (again), *pre* (before)

- Suffixes: *tion* (noun), *er* (person), *ive* (adjective)

If you see:

The experiment was very effect(1)_____.

You know:

- effect (noun), effective (adjective), effectively (adverb).

- After "very," we usually use an adjective → effective.

So you fill *ive*.

3. Grammar & part of speech

Grammar tells you what kind of word is missing:

- noun (person/thing)

- verb (action/state)

- adjective (describes a noun)

- adverb (describes a verb/adjective)

For example:

The research(1)_____ collected data from 200 participants.

Before *collected* (a verb), we need a noun (person). So:

- research (noun: activity)

- researcher (person)

- researchers (plural)

“researchers collected” fits best. So you fill *ers*.

4. Context & world knowledge

You should always read the whole paragraph. Use your knowledge of the topic and of the real world.

Example:

Many people now use smartpho(1)_____ to read the news.

You know from real life that *smartphones* are used to read news. So you fill *nes*.

5. Collocations (common word combinations)

A collocation is a natural combination of words, like:

- make a decision

- take a break

- heavy traffic

- strong evidence

If the text says:

The scientist found strong evid(1)_____ that the drug was effective.

The common collocation is “strong evidence,” so you fill *ence*.

You see that “Complete the Words” is a mixed task. It checks:

- your word knowledge from Chapters 4–7,

- your grammar understanding from Chapter 5,

- and your reading skills from Chapters 6–7.

8.3 Fully Worked Sample Paragraph 1 (Step-by-Step Walkthrough)

Now let's see a full example with 10 gaps, and walk through each one carefully.

Gapped paragraph (what you see on screen)

The Importance of Breakfast

Nutritionists often say that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. During the night, your body uses ener(1)_____ from the food you ate ear(2)_____, so your blood suga(3)_____ level can be low when you wake up. Eat(4)_____ a healthy breakfast can help you concen(5)_____ better in class and may impro(6)_____ your memory. People who skip breakfast ofte(7)_____ feel tire(8)_____ and may eat too mu(9)_____ later in the day. A bala(10)_____ breakfast usually includes some protein, whole grains, and fruit or vegetables.

In the real TOEFL task, there are always exactly 10 gaps. For this practice, we will focus on these 10 official gaps:

1. ener_____ 2. ear_____ 3. suga_____ 4. Eat_____ 5. concen_____ 6. impro_____ 7. ofte_____ 8. tire_____ 9. mu_____ 10. bala_____

Completed paragraph

Nutritionists often say that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. During the night, your body uses energy from the food you ate earlier, so your blood sugar level can be low when you wake up. Eating a healthy breakfast can help you concentrate better in class and may improve your memory. People who skip breakfast often feel tired and may eat too much later in the day. A balanced breakfast usually includes some protein, whole grains, and fruit or vegetables.

Word-by-word explanations

1. ener_____ → ener**gy** (noun)
   - Context: "uses ____ from the food" → we need a noun for something the body uses.
   - Word family: energetic, energy. Energy = power from food.
2. ear_____ → ear**lier** (adverb)
   - "food you ate earlier" = at an earlier time.
   - Grammar: after "ate," we need an adverb of time.
3. suga_____ → sugar (noun)
   - "blood sugar level" is a common collocation in health texts.
4. Eat_____ → Eat**ing** (ing form / gerund)
   - At the beginning of the sentence, we need a noun-like form: Eating a healthy breakfast…
   - Grammar: "Eating" (ing form) acts like a noun here (the activity).
5. concen_____ → concen**trate** (verb)
   - "help you ____ better in class" → we need a verb: concentrate, focus.
   - Word family: concentration, concentrate.
6. impro_____ → impro**ve** (verb)
   - "may ____ your memory" → a verb that goes with "memory" is "improve."
7. ofte_____ → often (adverb)
   - "often feel tired" → adverb of frequency.
8. tire_____ → tire**d** (adjective)
   - "feel ___" → adjective to describe a feeling: tired.
9. mu_____ → mu**ch** (adverb)
   - "eat too ___ later in the day" → common phrase "too much."

10. bala_____ → bala**nced** (adjective)
    - "A ____ breakfast" → adjective; collocation: balanced diet / balanced breakfast.

Notice how we used:

- Topic knowledge (breakfast, energy, sugar)

- Word families (concentrate / concentration; improve / improvement)

- Collocations ("blood sugar level," "eat too much," "balanced breakfast")

- Grammar (adjective vs. verb vs. adverb)

8.4 Fully Worked Sample Paragraph 2 (Slightly Harder)

Now let's do a more academic paragraph with slightly more difficult vocabulary and more use of prefixes/suffixes.

Gapped paragraph

Stress and the Body

Psychologists define stress as the body's response to any deman(1)_____ from the environment. When a person percei(2)_____ a situation as dangerous or very difficult, the brain sends signa(3)_____ to the body to release hormones such as adrenaline. These hormo(4)_____ increase heart rate and blood pressure, which can be helpful in the short term. However, chron(5)_____ stress, when it continues for a long time, can weaken the immune syst(6)_____ and increase the risk of illn(7)_____. Therefo(8)_____, many experts recom(9)_____ regular exercise and relaxa(10)_____ techniques to help people manage stress more effectively.

We have 10 target words:

1. deman_____ 2. percei_____ 3. signa_____ 4. hormo_____ 5. chron_____ 6. syst_____ 7. illn_____ 8. Therefo_____ 9. recom_____ 10. relaxa_____

Completed paragraph

Psychologists define stress as the body's response to any demand from the environment. When a person perceives a situation as dangerous or very difficult, the brain sends signals to the body to release hormones such as adrenaline. These hormones increase heart rate and blood pressure, which can be helpful in the short term. However, chronic stress, when it continues for a long time, can weaken the immune system and increase the risk of illness. Therefore, many experts recommend regular exercise and relaxation techniques to help people manage stress more effectively.

Word-by-word explanations (focus on morphology and grammar)

1. deman_____ → deman**d** (noun)
    - "response to any ____ from the environment" → we need a noun meaning request or pressure.
    - Common phrase: "demands from the environment."
2. percei_____ → percei**ves** (verb)
    - "When a person ____ a situation as dangerous…"
    - Verb: perceive = see / understand in a certain way.
    - Grammar: subject "a person" (3rd person singular) → perceives.
3. signa_____ → signa**ls** (noun, plural)
    - "brain sends ____ to the body" → plural noun: signals.

4. hormo_____ → hormo**nes** (noun, plural)
    - "release hormones such as adrenaline."
5. chron_____ → chron**ic** (adjective)
    - "chronic stress" is a common academic phrase = long lasting.
    - Morphology: root chron (time) + ic (adjective) → chronic.
6. syst_____ → syst**em** (noun)
    - "immune system" is a common collocation.
7. illn_____ → illn**ess** (noun)
    - "risk of ____" → after "risk of" we use nouns: illness, disease.
    - Common collocation: risk of illness.
8. Therefo_____ → Therefo**re** (connector)
    - Connects reason → result.
    - "Chronic stress can weaken… Therefore, experts recommend…"
9. recom_____ → recom**mend** (verb)
    - "experts ___ regular exercise" → verb: recommend.
10. relaxa_____ → relaxa**tion** (noun)
    - "exercise and ____ techniques" → noun from relax: relaxation techniques.
    - Morphology: relax + ation → relaxation.

8.5 General Strategy: Step-by-Step Approach

Here is a simple system you can use for every "Complete the Words" paragraph.

Step 1 – Read the whole paragraph quickly.

- Don't jump to the first gap.
- Try to understand the topic and general meaning (gist).
- Ask yourself: Is this about psychology? biology? history? education?

Step 2 – Look at one gap and find the part of speech.

Ask:

- Is this word used as a noun, verb, adjective, or adverb?
- Is it singular or plural?
- Does it need a tense (past, present)?

Step 3 – Use context and collocations.

- Read the whole sentence.
- Look at the words before and after the gap.
- Think of collocations: familiar word combinations.

Step 4 – Use prefixes, suffixes, and spelling patterns.

- Look at the visible letters.
- Think: can I make a common ending like *tion, ment, er, ive, able*?
- Is there a known prefix like *re, un, in*?

Step 5 – Check grammar and agreement.

- Does the verb match the subject (he goes, they go)?
- Does the noun match the article or number (a student, many students)?

- Does the adjective/adverb fit ("very happy," "work hard")?

Step 6 – Reread the completed paragraph.

- Read it as normal text.
- Ask: Does it sound natural? Are there any strange phrases or grammar problems?
- If something feels wrong, think again.

Mini Example Using the Strategy

Gapped sentence:

When water free(1)_____, it changes from a liquid to a solid.

1. Read quickly: It's about water changing state.
2. Part of speech: after "water" and before the comma, we need a verb.
3. Context: water changes from liquid to solid → *freeze* is the common verb.
4. Spelling pattern: freeze / freezes / freezing / froze.
5. Grammar: Subject = water (3rd person singular, present simple) → freezes.
6. Reread: "When water freezes, it changes…" → sounds natural.

So the missing letters = **zes**.

8.6 Common Mistakes and Traps

Here are typical problems students have in this task, and how to fix them.

Mistake 1: Guessing without reading the whole paragraph

Some students see:

The government inve(1)_____ in new technology.

and quickly write:

- *invent* (invent, invents, invented)

– but the word is *invest*, not *invent*.

If you read the full paragraph, it might say:

The government _____ in new technology to support economic growth.

"Invests in" is the correct collocation here.

Correct approach: Always read the whole sentence and understand the meaning before deciding.

Mistake 2: Ignoring grammar (singular/plural, tense)

Example:

Many countr(1)_____ have reduced smoking rates.

Some students write *country* because they know the base form.

But: - "Many" → we need plural. - Plural of *country* = *countries*.

So the correct answer is *countries*.

Correct approach: Look at:

- words like *many, several, a number of* (plural),

- verb forms (*have* vs. *has*),

- articles (*a/an* vs. *the*).

Mistake 3: Confusing similar endings (tion vs. sion; ance vs. ence)

Example:

The new law had a big influ(1)_____ on public opinion.

Possible forms: *influence*, influenza* (flu).

Context: "big influence on" is a very common collocation.

So the answer is *influence*, not *influance*.

Example:

The company made an important deci(1)_____.

The noun from "decide" is "decision," not "decition."

Correct approach: Learn common word families and check which spelling is usual:

- decide → decision

- allow → allowance

- differ → difference

Mistake 4: Over-focusing on one gap and forgetting the sentence

Sometimes a student spends too much time on one difficult gap and ignores easier ones.

Example:

The study show(1)_____ that regular exerc(2)_____ can redu(3)_____ the risk of hear(4)_____ disease.

Maybe you don't know "reduce," but you know:

- showed

- exercise

- heart

You can fill 3 of 4 gaps first. Later, when you read the full sentence, it becomes clearer that "reduce" is the best fit for "can ___ the risk." Don't freeze at one gap.

Correct approach:

- Skip a gap for a moment if you are stuck.

- Fill easier ones.

- Come back later; the full context may help.

Mistake 5: Writing a real word that does not fit the topic

Sometimes your letters make a real English word, but the meaning is wrong.

Example:

The planet's tempe(1)_____ has increased in recent decades.

Could be:

- temper → temper

- temperature → temperature

But: - "the planet's temper" = the planet's mood – strange.

- "the planet's temperature" fits climate change context.

Correct approach: Ask: "Does this word make sense in this topic and sentence?"

In the next section, you will practice with guided paragraphs that include hints. Afterwards, you will try independent paragraphs without hints, similar to the real test.

8.7 Guided Practice Paragraphs

For each guided paragraph:

- Topic: simple academic subject.

- Length: 70–100 words.

- First sentence intact.

- 10 gapped words (second half deleted, marked with underscores).

- Under the paragraph you get 2–3 hints (helpful notes).

After each paragraph, you will see:

- Completed paragraph.

- Numbered answers with short explanations.

Guided Paragraph 1 – Basic Biology

Plant Photosynthesis

In biology, photosynthesis is the process that plants use to produce food. During photosynthesis, plants take in carbo(1)_____ dioxide from the air and wate(2)_____ from the soil. With the help of sunli(3)_____, these ingredi(4)_____ are changed into gluco(5)_____, a type of sugar, and oxygen. The gluco(6)_____ provides ene(7)_____ for the plant's growth, while the oxyg(8)_____ is released into the atmosph(9)_____. This natural proces(10)_____ is essential for life on Earth.

Hints

- carbo_____ dioxide = the gas we breathe out.

- gluco_____ = a simple sugar used for energy.

- atmosph_____ = the layer of gases around the Earth.

Try to fill the gaps before you look at the key.

Guided Paragraph 2 – Simple Psychology

Habits and Behavior

In psychology, a habit is a behavior that a person repea(1)_____ many times until it happens almost auto(2)_____. For example, checking your phone when you wake up may become a habi(3)_____ if you do it every day without thin(4)_____. Habits can be helpf(5)_____, such as brushing your teeth regularly, or harmf(6)_____, such as smoki(7)_____ cigarettes. To chan(8)_____ a bad habit, experts recom(9)_____ starting with small steps and repla(10)_____ the old behavior with a new, healthier one.

Hints

- auto_____ = automatic (not needing conscious thought).

- Harmful = causing harm or damage.

- repla_____ = put something new instead of something old.

Guided Paragraph 3 – Education

Online Learning

In recent years, online learning has become an increas(1)_____ popular option for university students. Many universities now offer cour(2)_____ that stude(3)_____ can complete entirely onli(4)_____. This format provides flex(5)_____ for people who work full time or live far from camp(6)_____. However, online learning also pres(7)_____ some challe(8)_____. Students may feel isol(9)_____ from their classmates, and it can be more diffi(10)_____ to stay motiva(11)_____ without regular face to face contact with a teacher.

Hints

- increas_____ popular = more and more popular.

- flex_____ = flexibility (noun) or flexible (adj)? Look at grammar.

- isol_____ = feel alone or separate from others.

Guided Paragraph 4 – History

The Printing Press

Historians often describe the invention of the printing press as a major turning poi(1)_____ in European history. Before printi(2)_____ was developed, most books were copied by hand, which was slow and expens(3)_____. As a resu(4)_____, only a small numbe(5)_____ of people, usually from rich or religi(6)_____ families, had access to books. The printing press made it possib(7)_____ to produce many copies of a text more quick(8)_____ and at a lower cost. This technol(9)_____ helped spread new ideas about scien(10)_____, religion, and politics across the continent.

We will use these 10 gaps:

1. poi_____ 2. printi_____ 3. expens_____ 4. resu_____ 5. numbe_____ 6. religi_____ 7. possib_____ 8. quick_____ 9. technol_____ 10. scien_____

Hints

- turning poi_____ = important change or moment in history.

- expens_____ = adjective that means “costs a lot of money.”

- technol_____ = general word for machines and tools we create.

Try to fill all 10 before checking.

Guided Paragraph 5 – Environmental Science

Deforestation and Climate

Deforestation, the large scale removal of trees from fo(1)_____ areas, has important consequences for the global clima(2)_____. Trees absor(3)_____ carbon dioxide from the atmosphere during photosynthesis. When forests are cut down or burn(4)_____, this store(5)_____ carbon is relea(6)_____ back into the air, contribu(7)_____ to the greenhouse effect. In addition, deforestation can lead to soil erosi(8)_____ and loss of habit(9)_____ for many animal species. For these reasons, many governments and organizations are trying to protect and resta(10)_____ forest ecosystems.

We will use 10 gaps:

1. fo_____ 2. clima_____ 3. absor_____ 4. burn_____ 5. store_____ 6. relea_____ 7. contribu_____ 8. erosi_____ 9. habit_____ 10. resta_____

Hints

- fo_____ areas = forests.

- erosi_____ = when soil is slowly washed or blown away.

- resta_____ = bring something back to a good condition.

Guided Paragraph 6 – Economics / Business

Supply and Demand

In basic economics, the concept of supply and dem(1)_____ helps explain how pri(2)_____ are set in a mark(3)_____. Supply refer(4)_____ to how much of a product produ(5)_____ are willing to sell at different prices, while demand is the amount that consu(6)_____ are willing and able to buy. When demand increa(7)_____ but supply stays the same, prices usua(8)_____ rise. On the other hand, if there is too much supply and not enough dem(9)_____, sellers may lower prices to attr(10)_____ more buyers.

10 gaps:

1. dem_____ 2. pri_____ 3. mark_____ 4. refer_____ 5. produ_____ 6. consu_____ 7. increa_____ 8. usua_____ 9. dem_____ 10. attr_____

Hints

- In economics, dem_____ = demand.

- pri_____ (plural) = what you pay for something.

- consu_____ = people who buy and use products.

8.8 Independent Practice Paragraphs (Mini Test Style)

Now you will practice with four independent paragraphs that are close to real test items:

- Academic style

- 70–100 words

- 10 gapped words in each paragraph

- No hints

Try to follow the strategy from 8.5:

1. Read the paragraph quickly.

2. For each gap, decide the part of speech.

3. Use context, collocations, word parts.

4. Check grammar.

5. Reread the completed paragraph.

After all four paragraphs, you will find a combined answer key with the missing letter groups. Then you should analyze what kinds of words you missed.

Independent Paragraph 1 – Sociology

Urbanization and Social Change

Urbanization is the process by which more people move from rural areas to citi(1)_____. This trend has accel(2)_____ in many developing countries during the last centu(3)_____. Cities often offer more job oppor(4)_____ and bett(5)_____ access to education and health care servi(6)_____. However, rapid urban growth can also lead to problems such as overcrowding, unemplo(7)_____, and inade(8)_____ housing. Sociologists stu(9)_____ these changes to under(10)_____ how life in cities affects family stru(11)_____ and community relationships.

Independent Paragraph 2 – Astronomy

The Phases of the Moon

The Moon does not produce its own light; instead, we see sunli(1)_____ reflec(2)_____ from its surface. As the Moon orbi(3)_____ the Earth, the angle between the Sun, the Earth, and the Moon chan(4)_____. This causes the different phas(5)_____ of the Moon, such as the new moon, cres(6)_____ moon, and full moon. Although the Moon appears to chang(7)_____ shape, its size stays the same. Astronomers use care(8)_____ observations and measi(9)_____ to descr(10)_____ these regular patterns.

Independent Paragraph 3 – Education Policy

Standardized Testing

Standardized tests are exams that are desig(1)_____ to be given in the same way to many stu(2)_____ across a region or count(3)_____. Supporters argue that these tests provi(4)_____ an objec(5)_____ measure of student achiev(6)_____ and help compar(7)_____ schools. On the other hand, critics say that too much focus on testing can redu(8)_____ creativity in the class(9)_____ and create high levels of stre(10)_____ for students and tea(11)_____. Policymakers must balan(12)_____ the use of standardized tests with other methods of evaluation.

Independent Paragraph 4 – Health / Nutrition

Whole Grains and Health

Nutrition experts recom(1)_____ eating whole grains as part of a heal(2)_____ diet. Whole grains, such as brown rice and whole wheat bread, cont(3)_____ more fiber, vitam(4)_____, and miner(5)_____ than refi(6)_____ grains. Fiber helps regul(7)_____ digestion and can low(8)_____ the risk of heart dise(9)_____. Furthermore, people who choose whole grains ofte(10)_____ feel full for a long(11)_____ time after eating, which may help with weight manag(12)_____. For these reas(13)_____, many dietary guide(14)_____ suggest replacing white bread with whole grain options.

Quick Self Analysis Prompt for 8.8

After checking: - Did you miss more endings (ed, s, ing, ment, tion)?

- Did you miss more academic roots (achiev__, regul**, unemplo**)?

- Were nouns or verbs more difficult?

- Did you use the whole sentence and paragraph, or only the letters you saw?

Write 2–3 notes to yourself in your notebook. This will help you plan what to review.

8.9 Short Self Check and Reflection

Use these questions to think about your progress with “Complete the Words.” You do not need to write “correct” answers; they are for your own awareness and planning.

1. Which kinds of words are hardest for you?
    - function words (and, but, because, of, in, on)?
    - inflected endings (s, ed, ing)?
    - long academic words with prefixes/suffixes (information, recommendation, uncertainty)?
    - collocations (make a decision, strong evidence, take a risk)?
2. When you see a gap, what do you do first?
    - Do you decide the part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb)?
    - Or do you just think of any word that could fit the letters?
3. Did you use the whole paragraph to help you, or did you guess from one word?
    - If you guessed from only 1–2 words, how can you remind yourself to reread the whole sentence next time?
4. Which chapters should you review to improve your weak areas?
    - For prefixes/suffixes and word families: Chapter 4 and Chapter 11.
    - For grammar and parts of speech: Chapter 5 and Chapter 10.
    - For reading context and connectors: Chapters 6 and 7.
    - For collocations: Chapter 14.
5. How was your timing?
    - Did you spend too long on one difficult gap?
    - Did you remember that you can skip a gap and come back later?
6. What small goal can you set for next week?

    Choose one:
    - Learn 5 new academic word families and their main endings.
    - Practice 3 more “Complete the Words” paragraphs with a timer.
    - Review connectors and try to use them to predict missing words in a text.
    - Practice finding subject and verb quickly in long sentences.
7. How will you check your progress?
    - Will you mark which items you got wrong in each practice set and look for patterns?
    - Will you ask a teacher or friend to check one of your completed paragraphs?

If you use this reflection honestly, you will improve faster. “Complete the Words” looks strange at first, but with the strategies and practice from this chapter, it can become one of your strongest task types.

In the next chapters (9–16), you will go deeper into the types of words that often appear as gaps (function words, inflections, suffixes, collocations, academic vocabulary) and practice them in many realistic contexts.

Answer Key

Answer Key – Guided Paragraph 1 (Plant Photosynthesis)

Completed paragraph

In biology, photosynthesis is the process that plants use to produce food. During photosynthesis, plants take in carbon dioxide from the air and water from the soil. With the help of sunlight, these ingredients are changed into glucose, a type of sugar, and oxygen. The glucose provides energy for the plant's growth, while the oxygen is released into the atmosphere. This natural process is essential for life on Earth.

Numbered answers 1. carbo_____ → carbo**n** (noun) "carbon dioxide" is the correct scientific term. 2. wate_____ → wate**r** (noun) Plants take in water from the soil. 3. sunli_____ → sunli**ght** (noun) Common word: light from the sun. 4. ingredi_____ → ingredi**ents** (noun, plural) Materials used in a process. 5. gluco_____ → gluco**se** (noun) Scientific name for a sugar. 6. gluco_____ → gluco**se** (noun) – repeated Same word as before. 7. ene_____ → ene**rgy** (noun) Glucose provides energy for growth. 8. oxyg_____ → oxyg**en** (noun) Gas released by plants. 9. atmosph_____ → atmosph**ere** (noun) Layer of gases around Earth. 10. proces_____ → proces**s** (noun) Photosynthesis is a process.

Answer Key – Guided Paragraph 2 (Habits and Behavior)

Completed paragraph

In psychology, a habit is a behavior that a person repeats many times until it happens almost automatically. For example, checking your phone when you wake up may become a habit if you do it every day without thinking. Habits can be helpful, such as brushing your teeth regularly, or harmful, such as smoking cigarettes. To change a bad habit, experts recommend starting with small steps and replacing the old behavior with a new, healthier one.

Numbered answers 1. repea_____ → repeat**s** (verb) 3rd person singular: a person repeats. 2. auto_____ → auto**matically** (adverb) Describes how it happens: almost automatically. 3. habi_____ → habi**t** (noun) It may become a habit. 4. thin_____ → thin**king** (ing form) "without thinking" is a common phrase. 5. helpf_____ → helpf**ul** (adjective) Habits can be helpful or harmful. 6. harmf_____ → harmf**ul** (adjective) Opposite of helpful. 7. smoki_____ → smoki**ng** (ing form) Harmful habit. 8. chan_____ → chan**ge** (verb) To change a bad habit. 9. recom_____ → recom**mend** (verb) Experts recommend… (common academic verb). 10. repla_____ → repla**cing** (ing form) "replacing the old behavior…" – fits after "and."

Answer Key – Guided Paragraph 3 (Online Learning)

Completed paragraph

In recent years, online learning has become an increasingly popular option for university students. Many universities now offer courses that students can complete entirely online. This format provides flexibility for people who work full time or live far from campus. However, online learning also presents some challenges. Students may feel isolated from their classmates, and it can be more difficult to stay motivated without regular face to face contact with a teacher.

Numbered answers 1. increas_____ → increas**ingly** (adverb) "has become an increasingly popular option" – adverb modifies "popular." 2. cour_____ → cour**ses** (noun, plural) Many universities offer courses. 3. stude_____ → stude**nts** (noun, plural) Courses that students can complete. 4. onli_____ → onli**ne** (adverb/adjective) Complete entirely online. 5. flex_____ → flexi**bility** (noun) "provides flexibility" → needs a noun after provides. 6. camp_____ → camp**us** (noun) Far from campus. 7. pres_____ → pres**ents** (verb) "presents some challenges" = causes, brings. 8. challe_____ → challe**nges** (noun,

plural) Some challenges. 9. isol_____ → isol**ated** (adjective) Students may feel isolated (feel + adjective). 10. diffi_____ → diffi**cult** (adjective) It can be more difficult to stay… 11. motiva_____ → motiva**ted** (adjective) To stay motivated.

Answer Key – Guided Paragraph 4 (The Printing Press)

Completed paragraph

Historians often describe the invention of the printing press as a major turning point in European history. Before printing was developed, most books were copied by hand, which was slow and expensive. As a result, only a small number of people, usually from rich or religious families, had access to books. The printing press made it possible to produce many copies of a text more quickly and at a lower cost. This technology helped spread new ideas about science, religion, and politics across the continent.

Numbered answers 1. poi_____ → poi**nt** (noun) "turning point" is a very common phrase in history = important change. 2. printi_____ → print**ing** (noun / gerund) "Before printing was developed…" needs a noun. 3. expens_____ → expens**ive** (adjective) Describes "books were… expensive." 4. resu_____ → resu**lt** (noun) "As a result" = common connector (effect). 5. numbe_____ → numbe**r** (noun) "a small number of people" = few people. 6. religi_____ → religi**ous** (adjective) Describes "families." 7. possib_____ → possib**le** (adjective) "made it possible to…" is a fixed pattern. 8. quick_____ → quick**ly** (adverb) Describes how they produce copies ("more quickly"). 9. technol_____ → technol**ogy** (noun) New machines and methods. 10. scien_____ → scien**ce** (noun) "new ideas about science, religion, and politics" – three areas.

Answer Key – Guided Paragraph 5 (Deforestation and Climate)

Completed paragraph

Deforestation, the large scale removal of trees from forest areas, has important consequences for the global climate. Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere during photosynthesis. When forests are cut down or burned, this stored carbon is released back into the air, contributing to the greenhouse effect. In addition, deforestation can lead to soil erosion and loss of habitat for many animal species. For these reasons, many governments and organizations are trying to protect and restore forest ecosystems.

Numbered answers 1. fo_____ → fo**rest** (noun used as adjective) "forest areas" = areas with many trees. 2. clima_____ → clima**te** (noun) "global climate" – typical collocation. 3. absor_____ → absor**b** (verb) Trees absorb carbon dioxide. 4. burn_____ → burn**ed** (verb, past participle) "cut down or burned" – two past participles. 5. store_____ → store**d** (adjective/participle) Carbon that was stored in trees. 6. relea_____ → relea**sed** (verb, past participle) Carbon is released back into the air. 7. contribu_____ → contribu**ting** (ing form) "…released back into the air, contributing to the greenhouse effect" – describes result. 8. erosi_____ → erosi**on** (noun) Soil erosion. 9. habit_____ → habit**at** (noun) Natural home of animals. 10. resta_____ → resta**ore** (verb) To restore forests = bring them back.

Answer Key – Guided Paragraph 6 (Supply and Demand)

Completed paragraph

In basic economics, the concept of supply and demand helps explain how prices are set in a market. Supply refers to how much of a product producers are willing to sell at different prices, while demand is the amount that consumers are willing and able to buy. When demand increases but supply stays the same, prices usually rise. On the other hand, if there is too much supply and not enough demand, sellers may lower prices to attract more buyers.

Numbered answers 1. dem_____ → dem**and** (noun) Key concept: supply and demand. 2. pri_____ → pri**ces** (noun, plural) Set prices in a market. 3. mark_____ → mark**et** (noun) Place where buying and selling happen. 4. refer_____ → refer**s** (verb) "Supply refers to…" – verb in present simple, 3rd person.

5. produ_____ → produ**cers** (noun, plural) People/companies that produce goods. 6. consu_____ → consu**mers** (noun, plural) People who buy and use products. 7. increa_____ → increa**ses** (verb) Demand increases (present simple). 8. usua_____ → usua**lly** (adverb) "usually rise" – how prices behave. 9. dem_____ → dem**and** (noun) Not enough demand. 10. attr_____ → attr**act** (verb) Attract more buyers.

Combined Answer Key for 8.8 (Independent Practice)

Paragraph 1 – Urbanization and Social Change: 1. citi**es** 2. accel**erated** 3. centu**ry** 4. oppor**tunities** 5. bett**er** 6. servi**ces** 7. unemplo**yment** 8. inade**quate** 9. stu**dy** (not *studying*) 10. under**stand** 11. stru**cture** (family structure)

Paragraph 2 – The Phases of the Moon: 1. sunli**ght** 2. reflec**ted** 3. orbi**ts** 4. chan**ges** 5. phas**es** 6. cres**cent** 7. chang**e** (or *changing*, but "appears to change shape" → change) 8. care**ful** 9. measi**urements** 10. descr**ibe**

Paragraph 3 – Standardized Testing: 1. desig**ned** 2. stu**dents** 3. count**ry** (not *counties*) 4. provi**de** 5. object**ive** 6. achiev**ement** 7. compar**e** 8. redu**ce** 9. class**room** 10. stre**ss** 11. tea**chers** 12. balan**ce**

Paragraph 4 – Whole Grains and Health: 1. recom**mend** 2. heal**thy** 3. cont**ain** 4. vitam**ins** 5. miner**als** 6. refi**ned** 7. regul**ate** 8. low**er** 9. dise**ase** 10. ofte**n** 11. long**er** 12. manag**ement** 13. reas**ons** 14. guide**lines**

Chapter 19: Introduction to Daily-Life Reading Tasks

In the 2026 TOEFL format, you will encounter a section often called “Read in Daily Life.” This section tests your ability to understand the kinds of texts you see every day in English speaking environments:

- Notices and signs
- Emails and messages
- Advertisements and flyers
- Schedules and timetables
- Menus and order forms
- Web pages and online posts

These texts are usually short (15–150 words), but they require you to read quickly and accurately. The language may be informal, abbreviated, or*telegraphic* (leaving out some words to save space).

In this chapter, you will:

- Learn what daily-life texts look like.
- Understand what skills are being tested.
- Study 3 fully worked sample sets with detailed explanations.
- Learn a step-by-step strategy for these tasks.
- Avoid common mistakes.
- Practice with small sets and check your answers.

19.1 What Daily-Life Texts Look Like

On TOEFL, “Read in Daily Life” texts are short (about 15–150 words). They look similar to things you read every day, especially if you live or study in an English speaking environment. You do not need special background knowledge, but you must read carefully and quickly. Here are the most common text types.

19.1.1 Notices and Signs

These are short texts that give information or instructions in public places:

- Building notice
- Elevator sign
- Campus announcement
- Store hours sign

Typical features:

- Short, clear sentences or bullet points
- Dates and times

- Polite orders (“Please do not…”, “You must…”)

Example: Library Notice

Library Notice
The main campus library will close at 5 p.m. on Friday, June 12 for staff training.
It will reopen at 9 a.m. on Saturday.
Please return any books using the outside book drop while the library is closed.

You might be asked:

- Why was the notice written?
- When will the library reopen?
- What can students do while the library is closed?

Notices appear in public places: libraries, offices, apartment buildings, campuses, stores.

Example: Building Maintenance Notice

BUILDING MAINTENANCE
The elevators in Tower B will be out of service on Saturday, March 15, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Please use the stairs or the elevators in Tower A during this time.
We apologize for any inconvenience.
— Management

Features:

- Short and direct
- Key information: what, when, where, what to do
- Often includes an apology or thank-you

19.1.2 Emails and Letters

These texts are longer, more like short passages:

- Email from a professor
- Message from student housing
- Letter from a company about an interview

Typical features:

- Greeting (“Dear Ms. Park,”)
- Closing (“Best regards,”)
- Details about time, place, reason
- Polite requests and explanations

Example: Interview Invitation Email

> Dear Mr. Chen,
> Thank you for your interest in the Marketing Assistant position. We would like to invite you for an interview on Tuesday, May 7 at 10:00 a.m. at our downtown office.
> Please reply by Friday to confirm that you can attend.
> Best regards,
> Laura Green
> Human Resources

Possible questions:

- Why is Laura writing to Mr. Chen?
- What does she ask him to do?
- What will probably happen if he does not reply by Friday?

Example: Internal Work/Team Email

> **Subject:** Meeting rescheduled
> Hi Team,
> Due to a scheduling conflict, our Monday meeting has been moved to Wednesday at 2:00 p.m. in Room 305.
> Please confirm your attendance by replying to this email.
> Thanks,
> Sarah

Features:

- Subject line tells you the topic
- Greeting and closing (Hi / Thanks)
- Clear action requested (confirm attendance)

19.1.3 Advertisements and Flyers

You will see:

- Event posters
- Job ads
- Sale flyers
- Course advertisements

They often use:

- Short sentences
- Bullet points
- Persuasive language (“Save 50%! Best value!”)

Example: Job Advertisement

Part-Time Barista Wanted
* Evenings and weekends
* No experience required
* Friendly personality
* Free coffee during shifts
To apply, send your CV to: jobs@coffeehouse.com

Questions might test:

- What kind of person the job is for
- Which benefit is offered
- How to apply

Example: Sale Flyer

GRAND OPENING SALE!
Sunny Electronics
March 20–22 only
* Up to 40% off laptops and tablets
* Free headphones with any purchase over $200
* Extended hours: 9 a.m. – 10 p.m.
123 Main Street | www.sunnyelectronics.com

Features:

- Eye-catching headline
- Bullet points for quick reading
- Dates, discounts, and conditions
- Contact information or address

19.1.4 Forms and Applications

Forms are everywhere:

- Registration forms
- Hotel check-in forms
- Library membership forms

They are usually:

- Partly filled with your own details
- Partly printed with short labels: Name, Address, Date of Birth, etc.

Example: Gym Registration Form

Gym Registration Form
Name: _____
Email: _____
Membership Type:
[ ] Monthly
[ ] 6 months
[ ] 1 year
Start Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Questions:

- Which membership did the person choose?
- On which date will the membership begin?

19.1.5 Schedules and Timetables

These show times, dates, and events in a structured format.

Example: Community Center Schedule

Greenville Community Center – Saturday Classes

Time	Class	Instructor	Room
9:00 a.m.	Yoga for Beginners	Ms. Chen	101
10:30 a.m.	Watercolor Painting	Mr. Davis	Art Studio
1:00 p.m.	Spanish Conversation	Ms. Lopez	203
3:00 p.m.	Digital Photography	Mr. Kim	Computer Lab

Features:

- Table or list format
- Columns for different information (time, activity, person, location)
- Requires scanning to find specific details

Example: Bus Timetable

City Bus Line 5 (Weekdays)

Station	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
Main Station	8:00	8:20	8:40	9:00
City Hall	8:05	8:25	8:45	9:05
University	8:15	8:35	8:55	9:15

Questions:

- When is the first bus from Main Station to University?
- Which stop comes after City Hall?

19.1.6 Text Messages and Chat

Short, informal messages:

- Friends arranging to meet
- Classmates organizing a project
- Short messages from a teacher or manager

They may include:

- Abbreviations: “pls” (please), “thx” (thanks), “u” (you)
- Missing subjects or verbs
- Very short answers

Example: Meeting Arrangement

> Mia: Can you meet at the library at 3?
> Leo: Can we do 3:30 instead? I have class.
> Mia: OK, 3:30 in front of the main door.

Questions:

- What time will they meet?
- Where will they meet?

Example: Dinner Plan

> Mia: Hey, still on for dinner tonight?
> Jake: Yeah! What time works?
> Mia: 7? That new Thai place?
> Jake: Sounds good. Meet you there.
> Mia: 👍

Features:

- Very short turns
- Informal language (“still on for,” “sounds good”)
- May skip subjects (“Meet you there” instead of “I’ll meet you there”)

19.1.7 Web Pages and Online Posts

These include product descriptions, FAQs, online reviews, or social media posts.

Example: Customer Reviews

> **TravelBuddy Backpack – Customer Reviews**
> ★★★★★ (5/5) – "Perfect for my trip to Europe! Fits in overhead bins and has tons of pockets."
> — traveler_sam, March 5
> ★★★☆☆ (3/5) – "Good quality but a bit heavy when fully packed."
> — backpacker99, February 28

Example: FAQ Page

> **Campus Bike Share – FAQ**
> **Who can use the bikes?**
> All current students with a campus ID.
> **How long can I keep a bike?**
> Up to 24 hours.
> **How much does it cost?**
> The first 2 hours are free. After that, it's $1 per hour.

Questions:

- Who is allowed to use the bikes?
- What happens after 2 hours?

19.2 What Skills Are Tested?

Daily-life texts are short, but they test many important reading skills you also need for academic passages.

19.2.1 Finding the Main Purpose

You must understand why the text was written.

Question type: "What is the main purpose of this notice/email/ad?"

You need to identify the writer's purpose, for example:

- To inform
- To request
- To invite
- To remind
- To give instructions
- To apologize
- To confirm
- To advertise

19.2.2 Scanning for Specific Information

You often must find a time/date, price/discount, location, or name.

Question type: “According to the schedule, what time does the yoga class start?”

You do not need to read every word; you scan quickly for the key information.

19.2.3 Understanding Details and Conditions

Daily-life texts often include conditions (*if, unless, only, except, by*) and requirements (*must, have to*).

Examples: “Please reply by Friday,” or “The discount is only for students.”

19.2.4 Making Simple Inferences

You sometimes need to guess something that is not directly stated but is clear from the context.

Example: If an email says, “Sorry, I can’t make it at 2 p.m.,” you can infer the person is busy at that time.

19.2.5 Understanding Tone and Intention

Is the writer requesting, warning, inviting, complaining, or giving neutral information?

Example: “We regret to inform you…” indicates bad news.

19.2.6 Interpreting Basic Visual Information

Sometimes you must read a table or schedule, or notice footnotes (*, †).

19.3 Fully Worked Sample Sets

In this section, you will see several full sample sets with detailed explanations.

Sample Set 1 – Apartment Building Notice

Text

Important Notice – Elevator Maintenance
Dear Residents,
The elevator in Building C will be out of service for maintenance from Monday, April 10 at 9:00 a.m. until Wednesday, April 12 at 6:00 p.m.
During this time, please use the stairs or the elevator in Building B. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. If you have heavy items to carry, please contact the building manager at 555-2839 to arrange assistance.
Thank you for your understanding,
Maple Street Apartments Management

1. What is the main purpose of this notice?

(A) To advertise a new elevator in Building C
(B) To inform residents about a temporary elevator closure
(C) To explain how to contact the building manager in an emergency
(D) To invite residents to a meeting about building safety

Correct answer: B

- A is wrong because the notice does not advertise anything new. It says the elevator will be out of service, not that a new one is coming.
- B is correct. The whole notice is about the elevator being “out of service for maintenance” with specific dates.
- C is partly related (the manager’s number is given) but the main message is the temporary closure, not emergency contact.
- D is wrong. There is no meeting mentioned.

2. When can residents use the elevator in Building C again?

(A) Monday, April 10 at 9:00 a.m.
(B) Monday, April 10 at 6:00 p.m.
(C) Wednesday, April 12 at 6:00 p.m.
(D) Thursday, April 13 at 9:00 a.m.

Correct answer: C

- The notice says the elevator will be out of service from Monday, April 10 at 9:00 a.m. until Wednesday, April 12 at 6:00 p.m.
- C is correct: at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, the maintenance ends, so they can use it again.

3. What should residents do if they need help with heavy items during the maintenance?

(A) Wait until the elevator is working again
(B) Call the building manager
(C) Use the elevator in Building B
(D) Ask another resident for help

Correct answer: B

- The notice says: “If you have heavy items to carry, please contact the building manager at 555-2839 to arrange assistance.”

4. What can be inferred about Building B?

(A) It does not have an elevator.
(B) It is connected to Building C.
(C) It is closed during the maintenance.
(D) It is higher than Building C.

Correct answer: B

- The notice tells residents in Building C to “use the stairs or the elevator in Building B.” This suggests residents can access Building B easily, probably from the same complex, so B (it is connected) is the most reasonable inference.

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